

Air Force leaders visit AEF Silver airmen

Story and photo by
Tech. Sgt. Brian Davidson
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM, Afghanistan—Air Force senior leaders praised the dedication and sacrifice of Air and Space Expeditionary Force Silver airmen, who are supporting Operation Enduring Freedom, in a surprise visit to Bagram Dec. 19.

Although members of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group only had a few days' notice that Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff, and Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray, were coming to Afghanistan, the troops were ready to welcome them and to show the professionalism and pride in their role in the war against terrorism. The visit was one of many stops the senior leaders made to visit deployed airmen over the holidays.

Young enlisted members met with group leaders and requested an active role in hosting Jumper and Murray. As local commanders escorted the two leaders on a tour of Air Force Village, scores of airmen waited along the way for the opportunity to meet the general and chief, and to show off their accomplishments in village improvements, quality-of-life initiatives and mission readiness.



Lt. Col. Les Kodlick, 455th Expeditionary Support Squadron commander, points out improvements to Bagram Airfield from the control tower to Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray during a visit from Air Force senior leaders to see deployed airmen in Afghanistan Dec. 19.

"I was pleased that all of our airmen were excited that General Jumper and Chief Murray were traveling half-way around the world during the Christmas Holiday to come see them," said Col. D. Lee Hall, 455th EOG commander, deployed from Hill Air Force Base, Utah. "Having these Air Force leaders come to see us was a true pleasure, not a burden. We are very proud

of our mission and what we do here, and I think that pride was evident to the general and chief."

During the whirlwind tour, Jumper and Murray walked throughout the village to see new B-huts that are replacing aging tents, the fitness center, the town hall, security initiatives,

See **SILVER**, Page 4

Soldiers in CENTCOM eligible for \$5,000 re-up bonus

Story by Spc. Bill Putnam
Army News Service

WASHINGTON—Soldiers who re-enlist in the Central Command area of responsibility this fiscal year are now eligible for a lump-sum bonus of about \$5,000 and the bonus is also retroactive for Soldiers who re-enlisted from Oct. 1 until now.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld approved the Targeted Selective Re-enlistment Bonus Dec. 17 for active-component soldiers in CENTCOM. National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan are also eligible for a re-enlistment bonus under a differ-

ent program. They can receive \$2,500 for a three-year re-enlistment and \$5,000 for committing to stay six years in their component.

TSRB for the active-component was first offered to Soldiers this fall during a two-week window that closed Sept. 30, said Sgt. Maj. James A. Vales.

Vales is the Army's senior retention manager and retention proponent for the Army's G-1 at the Pentagon.

The TSRB, as Vales called it, was introduced in September to active-component Soldiers serving in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Korea because the Army was 6,000 Soldiers behind its goal of re-enlisting 51,000

See **BONUS**, Page 3

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Emergency personnel work the scene of Thursday's rush-hour blast outside Tel Aviv.

Bomber kills four in Tel Aviv

JERUSALEM—A suicide bombing at a major intersection outside Tel Aviv during rush hour Thursday killed four people and wounded 13, according to Israeli authorities.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the terror attack that also killed the suicide bomber.

The bomber approached a bus stop and blew himself up, Israeli Police Commissioner Shlomo Aharonishki told *The Associated Press*.

The Israel Defense Forces imposed a full closure on the territories after the suicide attack.

The assault was the first suicide bombing in Israel since an Oct. 4 attack in Haifa. That incident killed 21 people.

There has been relative calm since the Haifa bombing, but Avi Pazner, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said Israel has foiled about 35 attempted attacks in the past two months.

30,000 flee China gas disaster

BEIJING—At least 191 people have been killed and hundreds poisoned when a natural gas well in southwest China burst and released a cloud of toxic fumes, medical workers, officials and state media say.

More than 600 people have been hospitalized throughout the county, while more than 30,000 villagers were forced to flee from the danger zone, the *China Daily* reported.

Officials said a gas well burst in the Chuan Dongbei gas field northeast of Chongqing city, releasing natural gas and sulfurated hydrogen "killing and poisoning many people," the state-run *Xinhua News* agency reported.

The state-run *China Daily* said poisonous gas hovered in the air, making "an area of 25 square

kilometers a death zone," as many villagers were killed by the fumes as they slept.

Officials from the China National Petroleum Corporation, which owns the field, had set fire to the escaping gas in an attempt to stop it from spreading, a CNPC official told *Xinhua*.

Rescue officials told *CNN* that rescue crews were still in the area and the gas leak had not been contained.

The cause of the "blowout" was still unknown, they said.



The guest house is close to the presidential palace.

U.N. guest house bombed

KABUL, Afghanistan—A bomb exploded just outside the U.N. guest house in Kabul and destroyed a wall, but there were no casualties.

Authorities said the bomb detonated Thursday at 4:48 a.m. local time. There were five foreigners and an Afghan family staying at the house.

The location is close to the presidential palace and the headquarters for the International Security Assistance Force. Authorities are investigating.

Kabul is on a high security footing as it hosts a loya jirga, or grand assembly, which will decide future political structures for Afghanistan.

At least 11 aid workers have been killed in Afghanistan since March. The attacks are blamed on the Taliban.

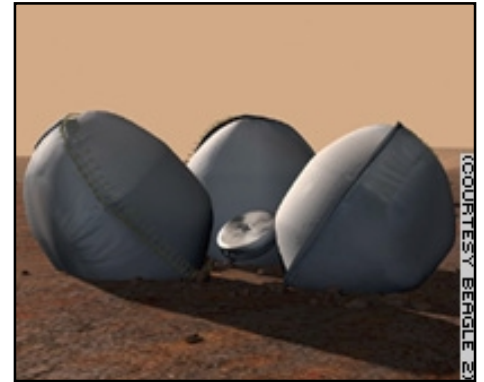
Plane crashes on Benin coast

COTONOU, Benin—An airliner crashed into the sea moments after takeoff in Benin on Thursday, killing at least 90 people on board and forcing rescuers to plunge into the waves to save others or salvage their bodies.

Benin's Health Minister Celine Segnon said at least 90 had been killed, four of them having

died in hospital after being rescued, and 18 had survived. Onlookers screamed in horror as corpses washed up on a beach in Cotonou, Benin's main city.

The Boeing 727's smashed cockpit, twisted metal and battered suitcases littered the shallow waters at the sea's edge.



Artist's view of Beagle 2's airbags separating to release the lander on the Martian surface.

No news is bad news from Mars

LONDON—British scientists have failed in their latest attempt to make contact with the Beagle 2 probe which was to have landed on Mars on Christmas Day.

The lack of a signal is a blow for the European Space Agency which is making its attempt to land a craft on the Red Planet.

More than 19 hours after the tiny craft was to have rolled to a stop on the surface of Mars, the radio telescope at Jodrell Bank Observatory in Cheshire, England, took advantage of the planet's position to begin scanning its surface for the Beagle's signal, *The Associated Press* reports.

Between the hours of 2200 GMT and 2400 GMT Thursday, at the end of the Martian night, they listened for the Beagle's simple carrier signal, rather than the nine-note tune that would have announced its survival earlier in the day.

Soon after, Britain's physics and astronomy research agency released a statement saying, "Jodrell Bank listened out for Beagle 2 tonight, but did not detect a transmission. The next opportunity will be via Mars Odyssey at 1815 GMT today (Friday)."

An attempt earlier in the day, by the U.S. Mars Odyssey already in orbit, was not able to detect the probe's signal on its first pass over the landing site, *AP* reports.

BONUS, from Page 1

for Fiscal Year 2003.

"We were running a little behind for the year and the bonus put us over the top," Vales said.

To meet that goal, the Army offered a flat-rate \$5,000 re-enlistment bonus for Soldiers. The only catch, though, was they had to re-up from Sept. 17 to Sept. 30. Additionally, only Soldiers in those four countries were eligible.

Unlike the first bonus's flat rate of \$5,000, the new bonus is calculated on two scales – called A Zone and B Zone – and based on a Soldier's rank, time in grade and years in service, Vales said. That means more or maybe less money coming in, he said.

According to an example Vales gave, a private first class with less than two years in service would be in the A Zone and would receive \$6,784.50 for a three-year re-enlistment. A staff sergeant in B Zone with over six years in the Army would receive \$6612.30.

The program, with the retroactive period to Oct. 1 included, will cost about \$100 million for Fiscal Year 2004, he said.

To receive the bonus, Soldiers have to re-up for a minimum of three years. That time will also include a 12-month stabilization at their unit, Vales said.

The Army is also trying to keep the bonus unit specific, meaning units already down range – like the 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan and 1st Armored Division in Iraq, Vales said.

Title 37 of the U.S. Federal Code states that the Department of Defense only pays a bonus to critical skills, he explained.

The Army determined that any MOS in those three countries was critical brought back the bonus.

To reinstate the bonus, Vales said a change was made to the code for Soldiers in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, Korea was bumped off the list of countries that Soldiers could receive the bonus, though Soldiers there are still eligible for a Military Occupational Skill-based bonus, he added.

Additionally, Soldiers deploying to Iraq, Kuwait or Afghanistan with the Fort Hood, Texas-based 1st Cavalry Division, or the Schofield Barracks, Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division are also being targeted for another type of bonus, Vales said.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

"Head of State"

1530Z at the MWR Building:

When a presidential candidate dies unexpectedly in the middle of the campaign, the Democratic party unexpectedly picks a Washington, D.C. alderman, Mays Gilliam as his replacement.

Tomorrow's event: Dance party



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Saturday
<u>Uzbekistan:</u>	Mostly Cloudy H: 44F L: 27F	Clear H: 51F L: 38F
<u>Bagram:</u>	Mostly Clear H: 39F L: 23F	Partly Cloudy H: 45F L: 21F
<u>Kabul:</u>	Mostly Clear H: 37F L: 21F	Partly Cloudy H: 43F L: 19F
<u>Kandahar:</u>	Mostly Clear H: 50F L: 32F	Clear H: 50F L: 36F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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control tower renovations and other improvements. They stopped along the way to greet and talk with airmen.

After the village tour, Jumper and Murray were escorted to the flightline where hundreds of 455th EOG members waited at the aircraft maintenance clamshell. The general and chief were greeted like celebrities as airmen gathered around to hear what they had to say, ask questions and take pictures.

Speaking about a recent midnight rocket attack on the base, Jumper reminded everyone that the war on terrorism is being won a step at a time.

"I'm proud of all of you for your dedication and the incredible things you are doing," Jumper said as airmen gathered around. "During this time of year especially, the sacrifices you and your families make to stand up for what you believe in doesn't go unnoticed.

"We're here to hunt bad guys, and we're going to find them. We found Saddam Hussein,

and we're going to find Osama bin Laden. It's the things you are doing that will make that happen," he said.

Enlisted and officers alike were equally proud to see the Air Force's senior enlisted representative, and crowded forward to hear his messages.

With cameras flashing, Murray talked of the dedication and professionalism of the airmen who are spending their holiday in harm's way to secure freedom and security for those at home. "You're here to bring the fight to those who would threaten everything precious to us," he said. "Our choices are simple. Either we bring the fight to them, or wait for them to bring the fight home to us."

Jumper and Murray praised the progress that has been made at making Bagram Airfield the most important base of operations in the war on terrorism.

"Only American military members could take such a dilapidated, bombed-out facility and build it into a base of operations that can reach throughout the region and deny sanctuary to

the enemy," Murray said. "In just two years, a crumbling airfield and control tower building has been turned into a base where people live and work in conditions that ease the burden of long duty-days and the separation from loved ones."

Jumper and Murray stayed to visit with Bagram warriors until everyone had an opportunity to speak with them before they headed back to a waiting C-17 Globemaster III, and on to their next stop to see deployed airmen serving this holiday season.

"I learned a lot from the chief and general," said Senior Airman Missy Mantegna, 455th EOG personnel specialist deployed from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. "They talked to us about our role in deployments since Desert Storm, and about how surge operations and steady-state operations work, and their focus on the AEF rotation cycle. It shows that they care about the same things we do when it comes to deployments.

"I love my job because I get to work with people, and it was apparent that they [the general and chief] feel the same way," she added.

New EagleCash card arriving soon to Bagram

What is it? The EagleCash card is a "smart card" that stores value in a way similar to a pre-paid phone card. Personnel deployed in the CJTF-180 Area of Operations would use the card, in lieu of cash, to pay for goods and services received at the PX, barbershop, coffee shop, post office, etc. You can add value to the card at the finance office by giving the cashier a check, cash, or deducting money from the service member's (U.S. only) military pay account (casual pay).



Why EagleCash card? The EagleCash card is a safer and cheaper way of handling monetary value in a deployed environment. For example, finance reimburses you for the value stored in the card if you lose it. If you lose cash, you are on your own! Other benefits of the card include its durability and speed of transactions.

Can I use the card at the bazaar? No. The finance office will start providing local currency (Afghani dollars) to support the local bazaars.

What happens with the money in my card when I redeploy or go on R&R leave to Qatar? The local finance office will return to you the remaining balance in your card before you redeploy. You will be able to use your card while on R&R in Qatar the same way you will use it within the CJTF-180 CJOA (e.g., Bagram and Kandahar Airfields, K-2 and Kabul).

What about transportation points such as Manas? Point of Sales (POS) terminals will be installed at several transportation points such as

Manas, Ramstein and Rhein Mein. You can use the card there.

How do I get cash if I'm going on emergency leave? The local finance office will exchange U.S. Dollars by exception.

Can I use the remaining balance on my card and pay the rest with a check or credit card if I don't have enough balance in the card for the purchase total? Yes.

Will coalition forces have access to EagleCash? Yes. The only difference between U.S. forces and coalition forces is that the local finance office cannot process transactions against a coalition member military pay account. So the coalition member would have to store value on the card by exchanging dollars.

Is using the card mandatory? No. You can use cash, checks or credit cards as usual at the PX, barbershop, post office, etc. However, once the EagleCash system is in place, the local finance office will not issue you U.S. Dollars in return for your check or casual pay.

The implementation schedule is as follows:

Ramstein—Jan. 22

Rhein Mein—Jan. 23

Bagram Airfield—Jan. 28

Kabul (TF Phoenix, OMC-A)—Jan. 31

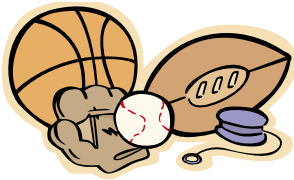
Kandahar Airfield—Feb. 4

K-2 (Uzbekistan)—Feb. 8

Manas—Feb. 10

Qatar—Feb. 15

For more information contact Lt. Col. Luis B. Crespo at 231-4680 or e-mail at crespol@baf.cjtf180.army.mil



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *SI.com*)

McGrady scores 41 in win, James 34

ORLANDO, Fla. — Tracy McGrady got the best of LeBron James this time. He's not making any promises about the future.

"He's unbelievable," McGrady said Thursday.

"He's not 18. Can't possibly be. If he continues to work hard and stay hungry, it can be ugly. It's scary how good he can be. You just look at him, man. The poise that he has out on the basketball court. The confidence. He has that swagger."

So does McGrady, whose 41-point performance overshadowed James' 34 points in the Orlando Magic's 113-101 overtime victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

The three-time All-Star, who's only 24 himself, conceded that he drew extra motivation from the first meeting between two of the NBA's brightest young stars.

"Absolutely. It's Christmas. I would like to be home with my family. But it's my job to come out and perform. And when you have a guy like LeBron coming into town with all the hype around him, everybody's going to be tuned in and want to see the outcome," McGrady said. "You have no choice but to get yourself ready to play."



Keith Bogans blocks Zydrunas Ilgauskas' layup attempt.

Yankees receive \$11.8 million tax bill

NEW YORK — Happy Holidays, George Steinbrenner! Your New York Yankees are the only baseball team to be slapped with a luxury tax bill.

The Yankees were told by the baseball commissioner's office that they owe \$11.82 million, a baseball official told The Associated Press on Wednesday under the condition of anonymity.

New York's payment is due by Jan. 31.

A tax rate of 17.5 percent this year means the Yankees' final payroll, for tax purposes, was \$184.5 million.

The other 29 teams all stayed under the tax threshold of \$117 million established by baseball's new collective bargaining agreement.

Commissioner Bud Selig pushed for the tax to discourage high-revenue teams from far outspending their rivals. The Yankees were told of the amount late Tuesday.

"One year's experience is not sufficient to make a judgment, but we are pleased with the increase in competitive balance on the field," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer.

Yankees president Randy Levine declined comment.

Ill. lose 21-point lead, but hold off Mo.

ST. LOUIS — Bruce Weber needed this one.

Barely into his first season at Illinois, Weber was growing weary of comparisons to Bill Self, who left the Illini for Kansas after last season. Tuesday's 71-70 win over No. 11 Missouri in the annual neutral-site "Braggin' Rights" game will help quiet the critics.

Asked if his players wanted to win the border-state grudge match for him, Weber said he had another priority.

"Shoot, I want them to win it for themselves," he explained. "They battled their butts off."

But guard Dee Brown, who led Illinois with 18 points and six assists, said criticism of Weber was motivation.

"I don't think people understand how much heat he's catching," Brown said. "But he's strong, and he just wants us to play hard no matter what. I think he's got all of our attention and we believe in him now."



Missouri's Jimmy McKinney gets off a shot in heavy traffic.

Sports on local Armed Forces Network TV

Saturday's schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ COLL FB: College GameDay Bowl Special (live) 2100Z, 0130L
- ❖ COLL FB: Bowling Green vs Northwestern (live) 2200Z, 0230L
- ❖ COLL FB: Virginia Tech vs California (live) 0130Z, 0600L
- ❖ NFL Total Access (taped) 0600Z, 1030L
- ❖ NBA: N.J. Nets vs Detroit Pistons (taped) 0800Z, 1230L
- ❖ NHL: Colo. Avalanche vs St. Louis Blues (taped) 1130Z, 1600L
- ❖ Sunday NFL Countdown (live) 1630Z, 2100L
- ❖ COLL BB: Missouri vs Memphis (live) 1700Z, 2130L

Sunday's schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ COLL FB: Virginia Tech vs California (taped) 1930Z, 0000L
- ❖ NFL: Seattle Seahawks vs San Fran. 49ers (live) 2200Z, 0230L
- ❖ COLL BB Womens: Ore. State vs Calif. (taped) 0130Z, 0600L
- ❖ Ballroom Boxing (taped) 0430Z, 0900L
- ❖ NHL: Flyers vs Avalanche (taped) 0800Z, 1230L
- ❖ NHL: Sharks vs L.A. Kings (taped) 1130Z, 1600L
- ❖ Sunday NFL Countdown (live) 1600Z, 2030L
- ❖ NFL: Buccaneers vs Titans (live) 1800Z, 2230L

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

U.S. Soldiers in Afghanistan hold special events to celebrate Christmas season

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) – U.S. Soldiers are out in force in Afghanistan, but they're not hunting insurgents.

They're getting a brief Christmas break from chasing Taliban fighters Thursday. The Soldiers are singing carols and having a feast at Bagram Air Base with Afghanistan's snowy mountains as a backdrop.

On a parade ground in the capital Kabul, Soldiers dressed as Santas and elves rolled by in Humvees decked out with Christmas decorations.

Troops also attended prayer services and held talent contests.

Some soldiers say they miss their families, but they believe their mission to stabilize Afghanistan makes it all worthwhile.

Two years after the fall of the Taliban, there are still about 11,000 U.S. Soldiers in the country.

Editorial: No holiday in war on terror

(The Australian) – The heightened U.S. security alert over Christmas, and consequent cancellation of several international flights, were timely reminders of the unique threat posed by al Qaeda.

The fundamentalists despise us so profoundly that a holiday in which families come together to celebrate peace and goodwill strikes them as a first-rate opportunity for murder and mayhem.

Along with the acceleration, over a religious holiday, of terror attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan, it was all reminiscent of the 1973 assault upon Israel by Egypt and Syria on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Except that, despite all the boasts in all the tapes from Osama bin Laden, the fact remains that the terrorists have no appetite for military targets or outright war.

Civilians are their preferred target, and their modus operandi – suicide attack – is an attempt to exploit what bin Laden has identified as the chief advantage his cadres enjoy over us, which is that we in the West are weak and “love life more than death”.

All this should be an additional corrective to those who argue that it is only by “addressing” its “root causes” that terrorism will be defeated. On this argument, it is U.S. foreign policy – in particular, support for Israel – or economic inequality that have caused terror to be unleashed.

But why don't they listen more closely to the terrorists themselves? In the torrent of abuse and resentment that flows

from the lips of a bin Laden, or the Bali bombers, foreign policy and economics occupy a very minor position compared with such Western sins as tolerating Jews, allowing women to do as they please, and not persecuting homosexuals.

And even these rank second to the sin behind all the others: that we do not live according to the narrowest interpretation of the Koran.

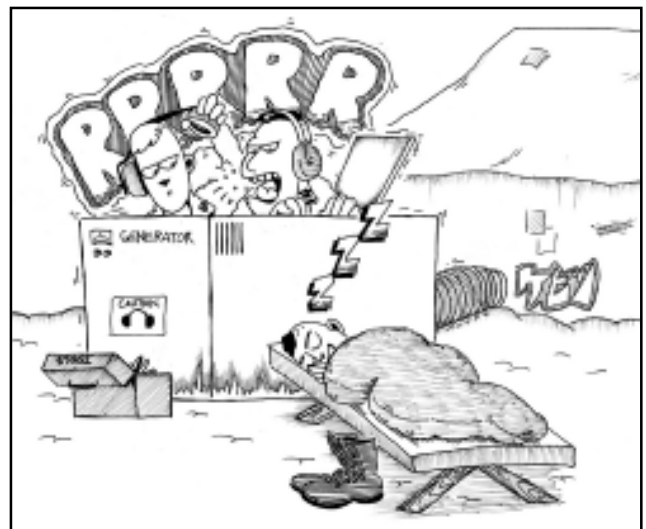
As a result, even addressing “root causes” such as the freedom allowed to women and gays would not work, because the terrorists' insane dream is to bomb the world back to a time before the enlightenment, and before the liberal world picture split off from the fundamentalist world picture and showed up the latter as inferior on every conceivable criterion – economic, military, scientific and human.

What sustains the terrorist vision, then, is the absurd notion that the decadent West will be defeated and replaced by a worldwide medieval Islamism – a notion bolstered by the coincidence that the Soviet Union collapsed after the defeat of Soviet troops by the mujaheddin in Afghanistan.

None of this will happen, of course, because people whose peculiar weakness is to love life will never exchange it for a living death.

The only way to “address” terror is to continue rounding up the murderers and putting them where they can kill no more.

“He must be artillery.”



kevin_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

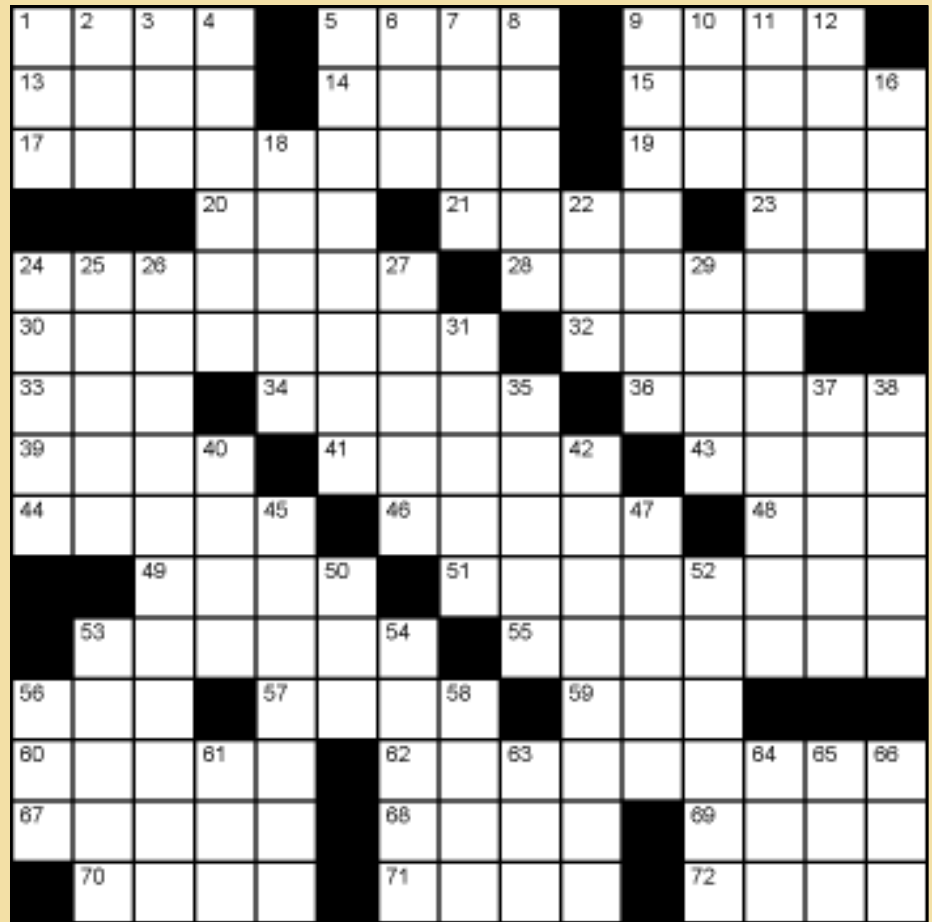
Laugh Support

Slippery crossword

(Courtesy of QUIZLAND.com)

ACROSS

1. Publisher ___-Davis
5. Beggar's duds
9. Places to enjoy pints
13. Love personified
14. Baldwin of film
15. China's Zhou ___
17. List of choices on a computer, maybe
19. Be skeptical of
20. Nitrogen, for instance
21. High: Prefix
23. Loop trains
24. Economic warfare tactic
28. Track down
30. Bald as a ___ ball
32. Army chutist, briefly
33. ___-mo (replay option)
34. Rating units
36. Fedora parts
39. Slaughter in baseball
41. Inventor Howe
43. Pig food
44. Katmandu's country
46. A natural, at the craps table
48. Pharmaceutical-approving org.
49. Love personified
51. Went off the track
53. Rural road surface
55. Give a new look to
56. Felix or Garfield
57. Skater's leap
59. "Uh-uh!"
60. Backup strategy
62. Top draw at a concert
67. Fend off
68. Intro to culture?
69. ___ Scotia lox
70. Campbell of "Scream"
71. Easy victory
72. Had down pat



DOWN

1. Microwave, slangily
2. "Editorially speaking," in cyber shorthand
3. Vain fellow
4. Cost-conscious
5. Seaport of Kent, England
6. Libation served at 9-Across
7. Filmdom's Rowlands
8. Racing shell
9. Human-powered taxi
10. Numero ___
11. Burl Ives hit
12. Fancy fur
16. Part of TGIF
18. Arch of Triumph site
22. Blouse or shirt
24. Buddy of "Barnaby Jones"
25. Winnie-the-Pooh's creator
26. Collection of outtakes, perhaps
27. Some graduate exams
29. Terminal listings: Abbr.
31. Like prunes and raisins
35. Passbook holder
37. Runway walker
38. Sam the sleuth
40. ___ Lee cakes
42. "The Three Princes of ___" (fairy tale)
45. Like a cute puppy, say
47. Twangy, as speech
50. Driver's license datum
52. "___, therefore I am"
53. Ancient Greek physician
54. "The Merry Widow" composer Franz
56. EMT specialty
58. Toy brick brand
61. Carson City's state: Abbr.
63. Tattoo place
64. "Smoking or ___?"
65. Adam's madam
66. Like steak tartare

Solutions will be posted in Saturday's Freedom Watch